OBSERVATIONS UPON THE PROTECTIVE VALUE OF THE INSPECTION OF PUBLIC WOMEN AS CARRIED OUT IN PARIS.

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FRANCE, which means Paris, sets the fashion in things venereal as in dress. It is probably true that a man visiting Paris will be more likely to seek and fall in temptation of irregular sexual diversions than in any other place. The freedom of speech and action tolerant to the French character, added to the cultivated desire to please, having in view the question of personal gain, is responsible for this, and makes the French woman when she essays the rôle queen of courtezans. It is impossible to tell of the exact number of women that here depend partly or solely upon sexual intercourse as a means of livelihood. The statement that 15,000 females are actively engaged in sexual occupations may be accepted, and as each woman cohabits with from three to ten men in an evening, it is plain that the prostitute of Paris is by no means an idle individual.

As a natural sequence of such promiscuous venery, disease results, and the French capital may be set down as a distributing center of venereal diseases for the rest of the world. The government, alive to this situation, has for centuries tried to lessen the disease-bearing properties of its public women, and that a real interest has been taken in this peculiar people, who are, indeed, no mean factor in the commercial welfare of the country, is shown by the city

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records. A complete department has been established under the direct supervision of the Prefecture of Police with a chief, a corps of inspectors both police and medical, with their assistants. One-half of a city prison, the Maison St. Lazare, has been set aside as a detention hospital, having over 200 beds, and at the Hotel de Ville, or central municipal government buildings, inspection offices and a dispensary is maintained. Here every actively engaged prostitute in Paris is supposed to come for examination as to the state of her bodily health, having, however, particular attention paid to her sexual apparatus. Every interest of the women is protected by the government supervisors. With the probable thought in mind of future identification by visitors, the lay heads of the departments discourage investigation. As an illustration of the secrecy accorded, I found that a number of the cabmen of the city were unable to drive me to the Maison St. Lazare, neither were they aware of the nature of the work done at that institution. These same individuals, however, would have considered themselves as being worthy of the contempt of their fellows if they could not have driven me in the most direct course to any one of the licensed houses of prostitution now flourishing about Paris, the cab drivers throughout the city being the readiest guides to these places.

For a better understanding of the system of municipal control of the city's prostitutes, I will trace the official career of a girl whose morals having become corrupted, becomes careless of her virtue, and bids openly for patronage. She may be arrested by one of the sanitary police for soliciting after midnight upon the streets, or she may excite the attention of one of the regular police officials and be taken for acts of lewdness at any time either upon the streets or about the cafés. For ordinary infringements the girl is taken before an inspector of police, where her

pedigree, personal description, and nature of her misdeed is noted; she is then allowed to go. Arrested a second time for a similar offense, she is again quickly freed after official note of her case has been added to the first arraignment. A third arrest brands the offending female as a professional prostitute. Her name is now listed upon the department record at the Hotel de Ville. A small photograph of the girl is taken and glued to a card upon which is written the individual's name, address and date of registration. The card is given to the girl, she is directed to return to the dispensary for medical examination at intervals of fifteen days under penalty of imprisonment of from two to ten days at the Maison St. Lazare, and again freed. Upon the back of the card the dates of her return visits for examination are set down. The card thus becomes the passport for the freedom of the streets of the professional street-walker, or house inmate if she elects to connect herself with one of the ninety odd houses which are to-day officially recognized in the city of Paris. Upon demand of the police or a prospective recipient of her favors, the girl is bound to produce her card for inspection. Failure to produce the registration card or any irregularity in the sequence of the dates subjects the owner to arrest and nominal imprisonment at the detention hospital. In passing it must be observed that, while accepted as a public charge, and with association close to the criminal class, the prostitute is protected within the law as much as are other classes of individuals. The system of espionage is, on the whole, not irksome, and identification not so minute as that of the Bertillon method for avowed criminals.

The life of the solitary prostitute is more in accord with a healthy existence than when herded in a company of from five to thirty-five others in the public house. Besides the competition in immorality, necessarily rife amongst them to attract the atten-

tion of visitors, the living of these girls is of the poorest imaginable; as the French kitchen must often not be too closely scrutinized, so here the quarters of the inmates of the cheaper resorts compare with the packing-box retreats of "hop" smokers in a Mott Street Chinaman's joint. Drinking, especially of a light kind of beer known amongst them as "bock" is generally encouraged, to fatten them I suppose, for the tendency of the young French prostitute is to grow scrawny, as it is toward early middle life to become gross.

The French inspection system is to a greater or less extent the pattern for St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Vienna, and there is a growing tendency for cities in our country to look toward it as being probably the best solution of our own municipal social questions. A full exposition therefore of the methods, in so far as they relate to the control of the disease-bearing capabilities of the prostitutes which are carried out there should be of interest. According to Dr. Levy-Bing, chief of staff at the St. Lazare, there are in the neighborhood of 8,000 registered women, all of whom, unless otherwise accounted for by the house visiting inspectors, are assembled and examined in relays upon inspection days. The rapidity with which these examinations are made cannot fail to excite the wonderment of the visitor. Four hundred women having been examined in the space of one hour and a half previous to one of my visits to the inspection office. The feat, for it is no less than one, is accomplished by the aid of two ordinary wooden gynecological examination tables placed facing the light before a large window. The women are ranged in a continuous line of five or six beside the tables. A dozen of the old-fashioned, large-sized, tubular speculæ are at hand, and as fast as used they are dipped in a boiling water-kettle before being returned to the sterilizing solution beside the medical inspector. As the woman settles herself upon the table she re-

ceives an observant glance from the doctor. The speculum is rapidly inserted, exposing the uterine os, and quicker than it takes to tell it, if nothing pathological has been discovered, the woman's place is taken by the next comer. It cannot be gainsayed that a highly developed power of correct snapshot diagnoses can be made by these examiners, as anyone experienced in ordinary surgical or genitourinary dispensary work in a large city hospital must admit.

If the female is discovered to have a rash, or mucous patches in or about the genitalia, she is placed to one side for final disposition after examination of the rest has been completed. She may then be committed to the detention hospital, or if in the judgment of the medical inspector she is not a dangerous disease disseminator she may be allowed to continue her calling while undergoing treatment at the municipal dispensary. As practically all of the prostitutes have perforce chronic vaginitis some allowance is made for this by the examiner. For this reason, and owing to the fact that the French women are expert syringers, gonorrhœal discharge is seldom seen. The haunts of these people being comparatively near to the dispensary, an average case of gonorrhœa can be successfully masked upon inspection day by this means. For, in spite of the manifest benefit to any of them by a stay in St. Lazare, the average French prostitute prefers her life of freedom of the streets to that of enforced confinement at the hospital, and will therefore shrewdly seek to deceive the examiner in every way possible. Microscopical examinations for the detection of the gonococcus are not made, for the reason that practically all of the women are endemic breeders of the germ, and if any concerted attempt at eradication should be made, the hospital facilities would become at that same moment inadequate for the purposes for which it is intended. Syphilis in its grosser mani-

festations, chancroid, or simple ulcer, with its complications, are therefore the chief conditions sought.

It is especially the older syphilitics who, becoming hardened to their condition, seek by subterfuge to avoid the enforced confinement of months, or even one or two years' time, during which some of them are forced to abide under the restraint of the hospital. To secure a continued freedom I saw a number of females, who by their characteristics and demeanor of action, proved themselves to be undoubtedly professional prostitutes, obtaining treatment in the great skin clinics at the Hospital St. Louis, thus, by medication administered with little or no importance placed upon the source or interdiction of continuance of their calling aside from the usual admonitions they are enabled to continue the life, although certainly not free from risk to their sexual partners.

To show the chance and reality of existence of undetected syphilitic lesions, owing probably to the length of time in the interval between inspections in one public house, harboring some fourteen girls, aging between eighteen and twenty-five years, I discovered two cases showing secondary syphilitic eruptions. In another nearby house, though, in justice to the system, it must be said that this latter place is not regularly listed as a public house upon the city records, although regularly and for years I was told it has continued as such undisturbed, I found a girl of possibly sixteen, though she glibly claimed twenty-one years of life, who presented a well-marked mucous patch at the corner of her mouth. That she, as well as those who had her in charge, thoroughly understood the nature of the condition was shown by the fact that, upon being approached, she momentarily excused herself to return again with the lesion cleverly concealed by the aid of cosmetics.

For the Maison St. Lazare nothing but praise can be said. The medical gentlemen in charge there, while keenly alive to the limitations of the value of their work as preventive of venereal disease dissemination to the male sex at the French capital, must be rightly proud of the immediate results upon their patients. So marked is the improvement upon the girls that after a few weeks' stay, with the quiet, absence of drinking and carousal, with enforced regulation of hygiene and proper medication, they become almost unrecognizable in the beneficial physical change which takes place. It becomes apparent to one who has studied the question that there is a distinct advantage to be gained by French prostitutes who continue under the control of the system which has been described. The woman's life is assuredly lengthened many, many years beyond the expectation of harlots not subject to such form of municipal control. The woman's existence being considered and her vocation being recognized as legal by the city's authorities, she is not subjected to the same degree of blackmailing with all of its demoralizing effects upon subordinate officials of the city's government as when not so legalized.

The question, however, is the protection and husbanding, not of the female primarily, but of her transient consort. Viewed in this light, the value of the system to the woman in enabling her to continue her career beyond the years of ordinary expectation must be set side by side with the influence which registration carries in the community where it is in force. Again quoting Dr. Levy-Bing, who stated to me that there were probably from 16,000 to 24,000 unregistered prostitutes within the city limits of Paris. The influence of the system upon the male population is that of increased security of freedom from attack of disease. Indeed

it is considered to be rather a breach of etiquette among the *demi-monde* for a Frenchman to ask his paramour of the occasion to produce her card. And that there is a spirit abroad of afforded guarantee existing against venereal disease in Paris, I have but to cite patients of mine, men about town, who have spoken longingly of a desire for a similar condition to be put in effect in American cities.

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